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## Textual Scholarship and Contemporary Literary Studies: Jennifer Egan's Editorial Processes and the Archival Edition of *Emerald City*

Martin Paul Eve 

Why does contemporary literary studies pay so little attention to the differences between versions of published works? After all, the *modus operandi* of our field is predominantly that of detailed textual scrutiny and critique; close reading backed by Theory. In recent years, though, several prominent and heavily studied works of contemporary fiction have been published under the same title, while containing substantially different contents between their covers. On occasion, this has been due to an earlier self-published edition coming under acquisitioned editorial control, as was the case with Andy Weir's bestselling novel *The Martian* (Ketzan and Schöch). In other cases, such as David Mitchell's prize-winning *Cloud Atlas*, de-synchronization between publishing houses led to radically different versions of the text entering global circulation and translation (Eve, *Close Reading*, Eve, "Keep Track"). Such editorial misadventure will come as no surprise to scholars working in the fields of textual scholarship; social and technological complications have not disappeared in the production of new work.

Yet, while this feature of the twenty-first-century textuality is expected by those versed in textual scholarship, there are relatively few scholars exploring version variants in contemporary literature, by which I mean the absolutely newest works, at the time of their publication. This is surprising given that close, symptomatic reading of precise textual detail forms such a core part of our usual practices. For instance, Esther Allen is of the view that works of contemporary fiction remain for quite some time "unfixed by scholarship," thereby allowing translators a liberal freedom in their trans-lingual interpretations (217). Robert Eaglestone has further noted that the "contemporary history of the book" is distinctly under-studied by scholars of contemporary literature (1096). On a similar theme, albeit with an anticipation of retrospection, Matthew G. Kirschenbaum has called for a greater engagement with what he termed the "future history of the book" at his Mellon-sponsored *Books.Files* event in 2018 ("Closing Remarks").

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This is not to disparage the work of those scholars studying contemporary fiction who *are* enacting such an archival turn upon bleeding-edge books. For instance, a great deal of attention has been paid to the material traces of David Foster Wallace's literary legacy after his untimely death in 2008, as has also been true of his literary forebear, Thomas Pynchon (Herman and Krafft; Roache; Rolls). In addition, Rose Harris-Birtill has recently examined David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* and the variant versions of its Mongolia chapter (56). Also, when authors reach a certain level of canonization this is often marked by the emergence of their formal archives (consider the Toni Morrison archive at Princeton, for example). Furthermore, scholars such as Johanna Drucker, Alan Galey, David Greetham, Kirschenbaum, John Lavagnino, Jerome McGann, and others have conducted much work upon the specific effects of new digital editions for textual scholarship (see Galey 217; Kirschenbaum, *Track Changes*). Indeed, for decades, book historians have known that, "by the logic of [the] discipline," they are "committed to acknowledge that these [digital] textual artefacts also embody the conditions of their construction" (McKenzie 272–73). Yet, for its novelty, the digitality of newly published literature has received perhaps *more* textual-scholarly scrutiny than print spaces of contemporary fiction (even when such print works remain digital in their genesis), where a lack of access to the manuscripts, the typescripts, and the correspondence of still-living authors hinders research (see, for example, Tabbi). Even when active and living authors are willing to engage with interested academics, there can be infrastructural, legal, and ethical challenges in addressing access to many of the prerequisites for textual scholarship. For instance, few who study contemporary literature would consider their work to be conducted upon "living subjects" and would not, therefore, apply for Institutional Review Board (IRB) ethical clearance. Yet, even within well-known debates about authorship and ambiguity on precisely *what* is under study here (Barthes; Burke; Foucault), the situation may be different when one begins to ascribe authorship or editorial practices to living writers based on the study of their works. As I will return to below, there are also copyright considerations that can frustrate such work, or at least dial up the effort involved in comparisons of editions.

At the time of a work's publication, though, there *is* a form of archive to which it is possible to turn and from which a textual history often can be inferred in today's globalized culture: the comparison of textual editions from different geographic regions. Where trans-textual difference exists, the construction of a chronology of revisions for a text allows different editions of contemporary novels to function as an archival backstop against their own later or parallel versions (without resorting to ideas of corruption or master copy-texts), which can have knock-on effects for interpretation and theory. Even where a precise chronology cannot be determined, such comparative

documents function, I here argue, as co-archival spaces that chart the traces of each other's emergence. The work of such documentation is repetitive, empirically driven, and requires hard graft. It seems ever-more important, however, when an increasingly global audience is referring to a novel – in online reading groups or university seminars, for instance – that scholarship on the topic recognize the specificities of the version that any given reader may hold before them.

As a demonstration of this argument about contemporary texts from different regions as (self-)archives within a realm of otherwise limited evidence and as an instance of the type of textual work for which I am calling in the space of contemporary literary studies, I here document the substantial differences between two versions of *Emerald City*, the first published book of the later Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jennifer Egan (1993 and 1996). Indeed, using this text as an exemplar of variance that could have been detected at the time of publication serves well to demonstrate what we might gain in such comparative exercises. In the remainder of this article, I deploy a range of narrative and quantitative approaches to appraise the types of changes to which the manuscript was subjected between the text's serial-published versions, the prototype text of 1993 (hereafter *Emerald A*), and the final edition of 1996 (*Emerald B*).

Egan, an increasingly prominent contemporary writer who came to public notice for her experimental 2010 work, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, has received a steadily growing volume of academic and interview attention in recent years. It is, therefore, of interest that the “prior UK edition” of *Emerald City* is, in Egan's own words, “missing material and full of mistakes and hopefully consigned to oblivion by now.”<sup>1</sup> This earlier edition also, though, contains short story material that has never appeared elsewhere and on which no critic has yet commented. The original version of the collection is nearly impossible to buy at the time of writing, but it is available for consultation in national deposit libraries in the UK, such as the British Library (with classmark Nov.1993/1643). If future work is to cite this material, I will here argue, scholars need to be aware of the potential version variants and alternative implications of the different texts by this prominent American author. Although *Emerald City* is hardly the most studied of Egan's writings at present, a primary contribution of this essay is to put this hard-to-find material on the record.

The interpretational consequences of the editorial processes undertaken by Egan early in her career are, I argue, far from trivial. For one, as I will go on to show, the virtually unknown short story “After the Revolution” forges a much stronger connection between Egan and her postmodern literary predecessors on the potential for successful civic revolt. For another, the edits to *Emerald B* demonstrate the interlinkage between Egan's works of fiction and her journalistic research. This is especially

clear in the way in which the figure of Sister Wolf is strengthened and associated with notions of homelessness in the chapter “Sacred Heart.” Furthermore, changes to “Sacred Heart” also demonstrate an evolving sexual confidence in Egan’s early writing in which the romantic attraction between the characters Amanda and Sarah is strengthened through a far-more intimate kiss than in earlier editions. This change at once has the effect of unsettling the reader’s confidence that Sarah’s desire for Amanda is unrequited – it is Amanda who kisses Sarah on the lips in *Emerald B* – while it also simultaneously links the story with Egan’s nonfiction work on gay teenagers and the difficulties of coming out (“[Lonely Gay Teen Seeking Same](#)”; “[Uniforms in the Closet](#)”). Indeed, the name of one of Egan’s subsequent *New York Times Magazine* pieces, “Lonely Gay Teen Seeking Same,” might serve as an equally appropriate alternative title for “Sacred Heart” as could her article on self-harm, “The Thin Red Line.” Finally, upgrades that Egan made to the attractiveness of the boy who asks Sarah to the dance in “Sacred Heart” – “Stuart” in serialized and *A* vs. the more dapper “Michael McCarty” in *B* – clarify to the reader that Sarah’s (sexual) attraction to Amanda is not in any way related to her own unattractiveness to boys. This is an important detail that avoids the earlier versions’ insinuations that this may have been the case.

The second contribution of this article is the data-driven approach that I deploy in my study of typescript variance of a contemporary work. For, in the study of contemporary writing we are both privileged in sometimes being able to speak with the authors of our texts but also hindered by copyright law. It is extremely difficult to produce a critical edition of a contemporary novel for the advancement of scholarship. Such an edition would usually be of little commercial market value, even though it may be a great scholarly undertaking, but obtaining permission to produce such editions is a thankless task. The work, then, of documenting version variants of texts that are deemed culturally significant in the present moment must, therefore, be housed within new ways of expressing and communicating such differences. Such work must overcome the twinned *media problems* of copyright enforcement and scholarly journal publishing, the former of which limits re-use, and the latter of which often carries little room for synopsis or description of variance.

Finally, in the data appendices that accompany this article, I present the spreadsheet notation that I have used to create a concordance of two stories from Egan’s early career, all within the bounds of fair-use/fair-dealing for copyright purposes.<sup>2</sup> I will also turn, below, to the deductions that we can make about publisher and academic labor in studies such as this. On this front, first, I posit the publication processes by which *Emerald B* was produced but, second, I also point to the vast amount of

academic labor needed for studies such as this, since no digital version is available of at least one of the editions with which I worked.

## The Two Versions of *Emerald City*

In 1992, Jennifer Egan won the UK *Cosmopolitan* short story award with the piece “Sacred Heart.” As a result, Picador published her first collection, *Emerald City: The Collected Works of Jennifer Egan* with the ISBN 0-330-32116-1 (hereafter referred to as *Emerald A*). At that point, however, Egan had written neither “Why China?” nor “Sisters of the Moon,” the two stories that she considers the strongest in the eventual collection that would later receive the same title, *Emerald City* (hereafter, *Emerald B* with ISBN 978-1-78033-121-8).<sup>3</sup> As a result, the table of contents is substantially different in this earlier edition of the collection. These alternative tables of contents are shown in Table 1.

The most prominent difference between the two texts is the presence of the short story “After the Revolution” in *Emerald A*, a work that appears nowhere else in Egan’s published oeuvre. However, as I will go on to detail, this story very loosely forms the background to “Why China?,” which would appear in the subsequent collection. The table of contents here is also substantially reordered, with Egan’s favorite/strongest stories appearing as bookends to the work in *Emerald B*. Curiously, however, “Sacred Heart,” the story for which Egan won the initial book contract, is not placed at the forefront of either edition. I will begin, here, by summarizing “After the Revolution” with comparative reference to “Why China?” before moving to examine the accidentals, copyedits, and typos about which Egan complained.

“After the Revolution” is set in Xi’an, China, as is the later “Why China?” In *Emerald A* this is spelled “Xian” rather than the copyedited “Xi’an” of *Emerald B* (“After the Revolution” 139; “Why China?” 9). Instead of the “Golden Flower” hotel of “Why China?,” however, in “After the Revolution” the action kicks off in the “Golden Blossom Hotel.” The protagonist, named

**Table 1.** The tables of contents of the two versions of *Emerald City* with paginations.

Chapter Number	<i>Emerald A</i> [page range]	<i>Emerald B</i> [page range]
1	The Stylist [1–16]	Why China? [1–25]
2	Sacred Heart [17–32]	Sacred Heart [26–39]
3	Passing the Hat [33–45]	Emerald City [40–54]
4	Letter to Josephine [45–66]	The Stylist [55–68]
5	One Piece [67–84]	One Piece [69–84]
6	Spanish Winter [85–100]	The Watch Trick [85–99]
7	The Watch-Trick [101–118]	Passing the Hat [100–110]
8	Puerto Vallarta [119–136]	Puerto Vallarta [111–127]
9	After the Revolution [137–152]	Spanish Winter [128–140]
10	Emerald City [153–169]	Letter to Josephine [141–159]
11		Sisters of the Moon [160–170]

Katherine Petrie – surely a homage to the scientific dish of cultivation and organic possibility – has cut her own hair and wears a “loose dress” that conceals “a slenderness she knows is past the point of being chic.” Perhaps losing her postmodern urge toward nominative determinism, the character names in this story have not been re-used anywhere by Egan, so far as I have been able to ascertain. Importantly, we are told that this character has an “ache” placed “behind the bottom ribs on her left side,” implying some kind of heart condition or pancreatitis. We also learn, on the first page of the story, that Egan’s protagonist is divorced from a man named Charlie.

Across the lobby, Katherine spots two friends from her past, married life. Attempting to avoid them, she instead veers into the Ladies’ room and, unusually for her, applies make-up. Eager to create an impression that implies an upturn in her life since the divorce, Katherine approaches the couple – her side hurting all the while – only to find, on arrival, that the couple is not Sally and Norman Hunkins after all (but only after she has loudly greeted them). Distressed, she flees into the street.

There then follows a lengthy description of the streets of Xi’an and the ways in which its character has changed over time. For instance, we are told that “two old women hobble on bound feet” just ahead of Katherine, but that, “[b]efore the revolution these were upper-class girls who lived in such luxury that no one thought they would ever have to walk” (“[After the Revolution](#)” 143). Meanwhile, the reader is introduced to Peter, whom Katherine has met in the “seedy ... top-floor dormitory for budget travellers” and with whom she now sleeps (“[After the Revolution](#)” 144). While Peter hangs out his laundry, Katherine recounts her morning in the hotel. At this point, Katherine claims to be 30-years old, and Peter 39. We are also told, in interior monologue, that it is Katherine’s birthday – and her side hurts again.

The couple walks through the streets of Xi’an and remarks upon its poverty, disease, and general dilapidation, as though what remains of the city has been “left over” in this period, after the revolution. “I think,” Katherine says, in a remark that resonates with *A Visit from Goon Squad*’s fixation on temporal sequence, “I would’ve liked it better before the revolution” (“[After the Revolution](#)” 145). The conversation between Peter and Katherine turns serious and on to the revolution, briefly. At this point, Katherine begins to boast to Peter of her family wealth, in the obverse way to the situation in the later story, “Letter to Josephine” (in which the character is ashamed of newfound prosperity). Peter becomes angry at her boastful taunting and Katherine, in a panic, begins to run away, her side throbbing dangerously with pain all the time. She crumples and Peter catches up, asking Katherine whether she is alright. Peter, carrying her, tells Katherine they are leaving to find a doctor. While being carried and ebbing in and out of consciousness, Katherine tries to remember her old life – her previous friends and husband. She is unable to do so and this worries her.



When she finally awakes, Katherine finds that Peter has carried her all the way back to the Golden Blossom Hotel, where he believed she would find the best doctors. They enter the hotel and Katherine closes by thinking that “she will give him a chance to recover, before they move on” (“After the Revolution” 151).

While simple enough in its composition, “After the Revolution” contains many of the stock traits that run through Egan’s later writing: an interest in bending time within a single sentence (think of the proleptic moment in *A Visit from the Goon Squad* in which Charlie has a memory that she “will return to again and again, for the rest of her life, long after Rolph has shot himself in the head in their father’s house at twenty-eight” [87]); a fixation on epistemic changes before and after an event; the fallibility of memory; and a female protagonist (although Egan’s writing is notably balanced in terms of characters’ gender assignments). There is also the artful misdirection of the pain in the ribs not leading anywhere within the story; the type of shaggy-dog-story game that Egan enjoys playing with her reader, sowing clues that may or may not resolve (see, for instance, the postmodern play of *The Keep*).

The extended dead-end of “After the Revolution” also situates Egan’s early work within the same postmodern frame associated with her first novel, *The Invisible Circus*. This text, which examines a generation’s nostalgic sense of having “missed” the countercultural movement of the 1960s, very much rings with the air of failed revolution that is implied in the title and narrative of this early, little-known short story. It also, though, provides a stronger and more direct connection to Egan’s postmodern literary forebears, such as Thomas Pynchon, in whose magnum opus, *Gravity’s Rainbow*, an ineffectual “counterforce” finds itself unable to cause any lasting change and instead resorts merely to urinating on a table of business executives (Pynchon 636). The narrative style here, in which implied structures of significance lead nowhere, is also resonant of Pynchon’s mode more broadly.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of “After the Revolution,” though, is the fact that this text was not previously published in a serialized form, as far as I have been able to ascertain. The other stories “Why China?,” “The Stylist,” “Sisters of the Moon,” “Sacred Heart,” “Emerald City” (published as “Another Pretty Face” in *Mademoiselle* and *Voices of the Xiled*), “The Watch Trick,” “Passing the Hat,” “Puerto Vallarta,” “One Piece,” “Spanish Winter,” and “Letter to Josephine” were all published previously in magazine format. Indeed, from the perspective of textual genetics and what it can tell us about Egan’s editing and revision processes, “After the Revolution” is less useful than these other works; it appears but singularly in *Emerald A*, and nowhere else. This, in itself, tells us something about the process of publication here, though. The single story that did not appear elsewhere was inserted into *Emerald A*, but then withdrawn by the



subsequent publication of *Emerald B*, although it is replaced by the comparable “Why China?”

Assuming, then, that the order of publication for the *Emerald City* editions was, in most of the stories, serial publication  $\rightarrow$  *Emerald A*  $\rightarrow$  *Emerald B*, except in the cases of the stories that are only present in *Emerald B*, we actually have the ability to appraise the differences between these multiple circulating editions and to document the differences between the texts. That is: what changed, both in terms of substantive edits and accidentals, between the editions? In order to compare the stories and thereby to understand and to communicate how Egan’s prose form has mutated over the editorial process (and over time), I required digital versions of these texts (an archive) and a way to map them. For instance, I was curious to know: Which edition came first? How might a possible stemma – that is, an ancestral chart of the priority and ordering of the versions – for these texts look? What are the effects upon reading that result from such version variants?

In order to answer such questions, the type of digitization exercise to which I needed to subject the text is one directly opposed to the oft-touted techniques of distant reading (data or text mining) with respect to labor, which are usually designed to compensate for limited reading time (for a broad history of the phrase “distant reading,” see [Underwood](#)). As it is impossible to read even all the fiction published in just one single year within a human lifespan, the aim with distant reading is for the machines to “read” (statistically) on behalf of people (for my calculations on this, see [Eve](#), *Close Reading* 3). What is often unmentioned is the vast quantity of labor in curating a textual database of high-quality sources that can accurately allow for such computational study – the exact labor problem I here faced, even with only three versions of several short stories. In order to usefully pronounce upon the differences between these versions, I needed to create a detailed database of these changes. Taking a sample of the first four short stories only in this Egan collection – and comparing only between *Emerald A* and *Emerald B* – resulted in a table of changes that was almost 50 A4 pages in length and that ran to approximately 10,000 words. This table contained only a summary of text that differed from version to version. Further, an extant digital edition was unavailable here; *Emerald A* exists only in print and there is no digital version. Finally, even if I could have obtained an Amazon Kindle edition of *Emerald B*, various Digital Rights Management laws in Europe and the US render it a criminal offense (rather than a civil wrong) to remove such protections. These locked-down digital editions would be of no use for a computational comparison between versions. In order, then, to understand the transmission histories and version variants of these texts, I conducted side-by-side comparative and systematic close-reading of three different versions (serialized, *Emerald A*, and *Emerald B*) and then manually compiled these into a database of coded modification types. The quantity of labor in undertaking this transcription exercise was such that

I opted to compare only two stories in this triple-version alignment. These two side-by-side comparisons prove sufficient to answer all of the above questions, though.

### Following the Yellow Brick Road: From Serial Publication to Prototype Text to the *Emerald City*

One of the most important aspects to note about the different editions of *Emerald City* is that the initial, “bad” publication of *Emerald A* was housed in the United Kingdom, meaning that many of the changes to the text from the US serialization could be expected to accommodate British English. *Emerald B* would then have to adjust this back to US English for worldwide publication, or so I assumed. Thus, while chronologically we can see that the texts progress from serialization (1989 onwards in US English) → *Emerald A* (1993 in British English) → *Emerald B* (1996 in US English), there is no linear chain of authority here within the above logic, since *Emerald B* would need to undo many of the localization changes in *Emerald A*. Or, at least, we would expect the stemma to run in parallel, with *Emerald B* more closely representing the original serialization in terms of American and British English. One of the first questions that I wanted to answer, though, was: what was Egan’s editorial sequence in the construction of the final collection, *Emerald B*?

It transpires that the non-linearity of revision in [Egan](#) early short stories is fairly convoluted. Consider the opening lines of “The Stylist,” first published in *The New Yorker* in 1989:

When they finally reached the dunes, Jann, the photographer, opens a silver umbrella (*The New Yorker* 32)

When they finally reached the dunes, Jann, the photographer, opens a silver umbrella (*Emerald A* 3)

When they finally reach the duties, Jann, the photographer, opens a silver umbrella (*Emerald B* 55)

While, as above, we might expect to see *Emerald A* adopting a change to the sentence and then *Emerald B* either rejecting or accepting that variance, we are not actually given a straightforward path from serialized to *A* to *B*. Instead, *Emerald A* and *B* adopt the text of *The New Yorker*’s version, but then *Emerald B* introduces an entirely different word: “duties” instead of “dunes.” Certainly, the word choice in serialized and *A* (“dunes”) makes more sense, and we might posit that this is some kind of optical character recognition error (i.e., that in terms of publication process a publisher scanned a typewritten version from 1989, ran this through a defective automatic text processor, and this error in the process was never corrected). It is

possible that the crossbar of the t could link to the “i” in “duties” that could confuse a digital system into perceiving “ti” instead of “n”. In this context, we need also to consider the evolving forms of material textuality and the rise of digital processes in the construction of textual meaning. For, without recourse to the serialized version or to the *Emerald A* text, the term “duties” might be assumed to be some kind of photographic reference. Perhaps it could also be a reference to the work of modeling; that is, that the characters have to return to their “duties,” even though the setup for the sandy environment of the story is then less clear here. What seems possible, however, is that the newly digital-textual processes of publication and/or misprinting alter the interpretation of this passage.

Assuming that this is erroneous, however, it is not the only instance where *Emerald B* introduces new problems, just within “The Stylist.” See, for instance, the following variations:

... sharpening the thin line of her jaw. Her ... (*The New Yorker*, 36)

... sharpening the thin line of her jaw. Her ... (*Emerald A* 14)

... sharpening the thin line of her jaw, Her ... (*Emerald B* 66)

Clearly, it should be a period in this case, as in both the serial text and *Emerald A*. It seems extremely unlikely that Egan would have returned to *Emerald B* and, in her revisions, introduced an error that wasn't present in the previous versions, particularly since she made no other alteration to this sentence. This points to a type of compositional error, or accidental, to use W. W. Greg's famous terminology (21), perhaps introduced by the publisher.

Aside from these typographical errors, though, there is another example from the beginning of “The Stylist” that demonstrates the ongoing revision process between editions of the texts and points more conclusively toward the editorial process that Egan undertook:

It is fragile as a newly risen moon. (*The New Yorker* 32)

It is fragile as a birdcage. (*Emerald A* 4)

It is delicate as a birdcage. (*Emerald B* 56)

In the serialized version, Alice's face is described as “fragile as a newly risen moon.” Evidently dissatisfied with the simile by the time of *Emerald A* in 1993, Egan rewrites this to use the more jarring “birdcage”; certainly an image that startles and suggests that emotional interiors have the capacity to break through the “fragile” “birdcage” of the face's surface. In this edit, the face becomes a breakable mask that hides an internal captivity, a much more evocative simile than the preceding lunar version for Alice's psyche. However, by the time of *Emerald B* in 1996, Egan has totally erased the serialized version, replacing “fragile” with “delicate,” thus downplaying

frangibility somewhat from the *Emerald A* version. This suggests a sequential move from the serialized version to *A* to *B*. There is only one other instance in which all three of the text's versions differ from one another in a way that implies a sequential editorial approach. However, that appears to be due to house style and could even be the work of an external copyeditor. The reader is given, respectively: "O.K.," "OK," and "Okay" across the editions (*The New Yorker* 36; *Emerald A* 12; *Emerald B* 65).

Importantly, though, of the 33 textual variations between the editions of the "The Stylist," it is notable that not once does *Emerald B* completely adopt a wholesale modification to the *New Yorker* version that was introduced by *Emerald A*. Certainly, *Emerald A* and *Emerald B* both draw on the serialized version. However, this seems likely to imply that despite the 1993 edition appearing before *Emerald B*, when Egan returned to the collection in 1995 she went *back to the source* at *The New Yorker*, rather than working from *Emerald A*. That said, as there is the overlapping change in "fragile as a newly risen moon" → "fragile as a birdcage" → "delicate as a birdcage," there is *some connection* between *Emerald A* and *Emerald B*. Egan seems to have re-implemented some of the same changes that she made in *Emerald A* from the serialization, even though the source of *Emerald B* also draws directly on the original serial publications.

This editorial pattern is even more apparent when we turn to other short stories in the collection. Take the 195 edits to "Sacred Heart" between the serial edition in the *New England Review*, the version in *Emerald A*, and *Emerald B*'s text. Of these edits, not a single one shows *Emerald B* reusing text from *Emerald A*. Further, unlike in "The Stylist," there are no instances where we can discern evolutionary edits to the text between all three editions, as we could with the "birdcage" line in "The Stylist." This gives a clear stemma: *Emerald B* is derived from the *New England Review* edition, as is *Emerald A*. There is little to no influential path between *Emerald A* and *Emerald B* in the editing of "Sacred Heart," but Egan did continue to make modifications to the text.

One such edit can be seen in "Letter to Josephine": in *Emerald A* we are given "Tangled flowers" that is changed simply to "Flowers" in the *B* edition, since it then removes the repetition of "tangled" in the "tangles of lobsters" mentioned shortly thereafter (*Emerald A* 60; *Emerald B* 154). In other words, Egan took the assemblage of the second edition of *Emerald City* as an opportunity to revise her original work from serial form and to overcome the pitfalls that she saw in the earlier versions. On occasion, this *did* incorporate edits that were made in *Emerald A*. However, *Emerald B* also straightforwardly discards many edits made in *Emerald A* in favor of returning to the original version. Interestingly, of these edits, only nine are changes from or to American English from or to British – a mere 4.5%. These include changing words such as "bobby pin" to "hairpin" in "Sacred Heart" to

accommodate a British audience in the Picador edition (“[Sacred Heart](#)” 49, *Emerald A* 20; *Emerald B* 27). That said, it is also clear that the copyediting on the Picador edition was extremely light, leaving most of the serial text intact, while *Emerald B* went through a more substantive set of revisions (despite the introduction of new errors that I flagged above). For 50 of the 195 edits to “Sacred Heart” between the serial and *Emerald B* editions (26%) modify punctuation. This is usually to delineate sub-clauses with commas, to connect compound nouns with hyphens, to place paragraph breaks in different locations, and, on occasion, to split longer sentences. Such accidentals, which mostly affect presentation, are not the only changes made here, though.

The most important edit that Egan made between the 1991, 1993, and 1996 editions of “Sacred Heart” pertains to the single lines: “a thin smile, and kissed me on the cheek” (*New England Review* 50–51; *Emerald A* 22) and “a thin smile – and kissed me on the lips” (*Emerald B* 29). “Sacred Heart” is the story, remember, of a young girl named Sarah who develops an unrequited, we discover at the piece’s close, schoolgirl crush on her classmate, Amanda, at their strict religious school. A central plotline within the work is that Amanda cuts her own arms with razor blades, an aspect into which Sarah becomes drawn. While this episode was based on Egan’s own journalistic research at the time into self-harm (“[The Thin Red Line](#)”), the same phenomenon here becomes the basis for Sarah and Amanda’s asymmetrical relationship. In the *New England Review* and *Emerald A* versions of the story, Amanda and Sarah kiss on the cheek, twice; once directly after the cutting episode and once outside the shoe shop where Amanda ends up working. In *Emerald B*, however, the bolder Egan of 1996 feels able to change the initial embrace to the more eroticized version in which Amanda kisses Sarah on the lips. The act is also visually segregated from the rest of the sentence through its preceding dash, thereby setting this moment aside from the main textual body and drawing it to the reader’s attention. Certainly, this version in *Emerald B* makes more sense; it better explains why Sarah’s relationship with Amanda borders on the obsessive since it is an intense *romantic* attraction that Sarah feels, as opposed to a merely platonic friendship. The parallels between the texts’ two cutting incidents also reenforce a type of familiar bond through *blood* as part of a romantic relationship or infatuation. This is emphasized by the fact that Sarah’s cutting takes place within her childhood bedroom, surrounded by the objects of soon-to-be-lost innocence, through blood-affiliation with Amanda. In other words, the kiss on the lips reenforces the bedroom scene of cutting as a type of loss of virginity. The romanticization and sexualization of this relationship in the 1996 edition through the kiss on the lips are far more congruent with the other metaphors in the piece.

There are further changes throughout the versions here that may cause difficulties when referring to different editions. For instance, the figure “Stuart,” in the *New England Review* and *Emerald A*, with whom Sarah goes to the formal dance, is renamed “Michael McCarty” in the final collection of *Emerald B* (*New England Review* 55; *Emerald A* 30; *Emerald B* 37). Of notable difference here is the fact that Stuart is an awkward, “lifeless,” frightened figure who seems terrified of the dance, yielding the impression that Sarah is asked by one of the less attractive and less confident boys in her year set, thereby also affecting the reader’s perception of Sarah’s appearance and social standing. There is a difficult potential (but surely accidental) insinuation, therefore, in the serialized and *Emerald A* versions that Sarah’s obsession with and attraction to Amanda could be linked to the fact that she is shunned by the more desirable boys in her cohort; an age-old slur on women who seek same-sex relationships. By contrast, in *Emerald B*, Michael McCarty is a “handsome, sullen boy,” which substantially alters the reader’s appraisal of both characters and clarifies that Sarah’s attraction to Amanda is not due to lack of opportunity elsewhere.

Finally, the reader is also given, in *Emerald B*, a clearer understanding of Sister Wolf’s role. In the *New England Review* and *Emerald A*, it is merely stated that she works at the school. However, in *Emerald B*, the reader is explicitly told that she is the “homeroom teacher” for the class, a detail that is not stipulated in the previous editions (*Emerald B* 30). This is more than a trivial addition since, in Egan’s first novel, *The Invisible Circus*, published just before *Emerald B*, one of the primary characters is also called “Wolf.” The boyfriend of Phoebe’s sister Faith, in that novel, Wolf represents the lost connection that Phoebe feels upon Faith’s disappearance. In “Sacred Heart,” the character of the wolf is again used to convey the news of loss. This is a romanticized character disappearing without knowledge of the destination while also being associated with a homelessness since this is the character who takes pity on the fact that Amanda’s parents are absent. This same nostalgia and longing for connection in *The Invisible Circus* is exactly what is covered in this single line that Egan chose to change between the editions of her stories. In making the word “wolf” central to an esthetic of routine and registration within the school context – one that is marked by disruption and absence – this modification to Egan’s story builds upon an intertextuality within Egan’s own oeuvre that has yet to be remarked upon in the scholarly literature.

## Conclusion

The two different editions of Jennifer Egan’s early short story collection, *Emerald City*, provide scholars with a fascinating window onto her editorial processes but also onto the complexity of the publishing landscape for



contemporary fiction. The differences between the editions can be attributed to a range of social and technological factors at different stages in the publication process, such as the transition to a digital-first workflow in the early 1990s that, I speculated above, necessitated an OCR process to digitize the original version. Such variances between these texts, though, have far greater resonances for the study of contemporary literature more broadly. A predominance of theoretical, thematic, symptomatic, and close reading techniques in this space has left less room for the archive than might be imagined. It is often believed that the reason for this is simply that such archives do not exist *yet* for contemporary literature.

Material publishing processes, however, condition our possibilities for interpretation. As seen above, the growth of digital publication methodologies seemed to change words in texts that should have been identical. The very material traces of this process frustrate close readings that are unaware of variant editions. Without a closer sociological focus upon institutions and processes of publication and how they intervene to co-create meaning, contemporary literary studies misses a trick – it misses the trick of the already-published archive.

One of my aims in this article has been to show that such archives have always been there, directly under our noses, but just under-explored by scholars in the space of contemporary literary studies. Through a greater attention to a textual-scholarly historicization of the present, I have argued and demonstrated, we can glean details of editorial processes that can then have interpretational consequences. Although I have deliberately opted herein not to re-survey the voluminous secondary literature on the archive and its feverish definitions, there is no reason why a *contemporary-archival* approach to the study of contemporary fiction needs to be opposed to widespread theoretically informed interpretative practices. Indeed, if we are always to historicize, the fracturing of seemingly singular works into constituent moments *en route* to their final forms yields to us an opportunity for multiple hermeneutic pathways. The forking situational temporalities within which we might read the multiple versions of singular texts provide rich grounds for interpretation. For, as I have argued, those who study contemporary literature could do well in the future to think more about this relationship of texts to their other-mirrors, their precedent, and publicly available co-emergent volumes, their other versions of themselves.

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## Notes

1. Jennifer Egan, personal correspondence with the author, 21 August 2017. For existing scholarship on Egan, see [Bellin](#); [Bruhn](#); [Cowart](#); [Dinnen](#), *The Digital Banal*, [Dinnen](#), “‘This Is All Artificial’”; [Eve](#), “Structural Dissatisfaction”; [Funk](#), “Found Objects”, [Funk](#), *The Literature of Reconstruction*; [Gadea](#); [Hartmann](#); [Humann](#); [Johnston](#); [Kelly](#); [Kirby](#); [Moling](#); [Moran](#); [Olson](#); [Precup](#); [C. Reilly](#); [K.A., Reilly](#); [van de Velde](#); [Smith](#); [Strong](#); [Zappen](#).
2. Data appendices are available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3253829>.
3. Jennifer Egan, personal correspondence with the author, 3 September 2017.

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